

open field, surely, "good ground," where, morning by morning, the sower goes forth to sow, and the seed is the Word. All our teaching of children should be given reverently, with the humble sense that we are invited in this matter to co-operate with the Holy Spirit; but it should be given dutifully and diligently, with the awful sense that our co-operation would appear to be made a condition of the divine action; that the Saviour of the world pleads with us to "Suffer the little children to come unto Me," as if we had the power to hinder, as we know that we have.

This thought of the Saviour of the world implies another conception which we sometimes leave out of sight in dealing with children. Young faces are not always sunny and lovely; even the brightest children in the happiest circumstances have their clouded hours. We rightly put the cloud down to some little disorder, or to the weather, but these are the secondary causes which reveal a deep-seated discontent. Children have a sense of sin acute in proportion to their sensitiveness. We are in danger of trusting too much to a rose-water treatment; we do not take children seriously enough; brought face to face with a child we find he is a very real person, but in our educational theories we take him as "something between a wax doll and an angel." He sins; he is guilty of greediness, falsehood, malice, cruelty, a hundred faults that would be hateful in a grown-up person; we say he will know better by-and-by. He will never know better; he is keenly aware of his own odiousness. How many of us would say about our childhood, if we told the whole truth, "Oh, I was an odious little thing!" and that, not because we recollect our faults, but because we recollect our childish estimate of ourselves. Many a bright and merry child is odious in his own eyes; and the "peace, peace where there is no peace" of fond parents and friends is little comfort. It is well that we "Ask for the old paths where is the good way;" it is not well that, in the name of the old paths, we lead our children into blind alleys; nor, that we let them follow the new into bewildering mazes.

NURSERY FRENCH.

BY FRANCES EPPS.

NO. II.

The nursery folk, four of them, ages five to ten, have learned the French names of many of the objects they see; they have made little sentences, "j'aime mon frère," "le chat dort." They have played "J'ai un panier," "Buz," "Vingt Questions." They have danced and sung merrily "A la Monaco," "Sur le pont." And now the mother feels that something fresh is needed, something really interesting and attractive to the children, to keep the Nursery French happily and usefully alive. While seeking for the necessary new ideas, she naturally turns to the children themselves, and, by watching their daily play, soon finds out what interests them most. The two-year-old baby first comes to her aid, sitting at her little table, acting hostess with such grace and propriety whilst offering her tiny cups of imaginary tea to the company of dolls. Then turning to the elder children, she sees the girls, dressed up in bonnet, veil, shawl—anything that looks grown up—absorbed in the parts of ladies and their maid, overwhelmed with family cares, travelling in train, steamer, or railway-omnibus (the sofa does equally well for any conveyance); while the boy discharges with much earnestness and energy the various duties of stoker, guard, captain, driver, uncle to the dolls.

It is difficult to find anything more delightful to children than all "pretend" games, in which they have the bliss of "being" someone else. This love of impersonation may well be turned to account to help on the Nursery French, by arranging little plays in which the mother takes a leading part, and also prepares the little actors before they begin, prompts them during the performance, and by thoughtful as well as

playful repetition fixes the new words or sentences in their memory. If the children are the fortunate possessors of a store of "dressing-up" properties, the game may be made very complete and popular.

The subjects for the little plays will naturally be suggested by the children's own tastes and interests, and each play will aim at teaching a new set of words and expressions. Are the children fond of playing at ladies? Then "La Visite" will call for the names of various articles of dress and the different modes of greeting. Does the little flock enjoy an imaginary spring cleaning of the nursery? On hands and knees, scrubbing the floor with one brick for a brush and another for soap, and then trying the paint with the same implements? Then "Le Ménage" will teach the names of articles of furniture, how they must "épousseter la chaise," "nettoyer à la brosse." When once the children grasp the idea of what is required of them in these little French plays, they will try eagerly to understand and answer; entering heartily into the "dressing-up" and realisation of the characters given them. Very soon, too, they will suggest subjects themselves. "Couldn't we play at Hospital, School, Wild Animals, Giant-killing?" or whatever is the favourite diversion of the time being.

The mother having chosen her subject, "La Visite" perhaps, determines what fresh words shall be learnt, then thinks out the little play. Next, she will prepare the way, on some chatty occasion, tea-time or out walking, by telling the children they shall play next at "visiting," that the French say "faire une visite," or "visiter." Then the parts can be arranged. The eldest girl can be the lady to visit, Madame Morin, and the little ones her children, Henri and Lucille. The second in age can be the lady visited, Madame le Brun, and the doll will do for her baby. The mother herself will act as maid to Madame le Brun. Discussion will then follow as to the arrangements and dialogue, and the children will be anxious to acquire the French they will need, as the mother guides them to the lines she has in view. A visit to the "dressing-up" drawer or box comes next, and while choosing costumes for each, the names and colours of the various things will be readily learnt, and, by the way, that "voulez vous porter" or "mettre" means "will you wear," "nous sommes tous prêts," "we are all ready," and so on.

Characters, costumes, dialogue thus provided for so far, we may begin the first rehearsal of

"LA VISITE."

CHARACTERS.

MADAME MORIN	...	...	<i>Eldest child.</i>
HENRI AND LUCILLE	...	...	<i>"The little ones."</i>
MADAME LE BRUN	...	...	<i>The second eldest.</i>
LE BÉBÉ	...	...	<i>A doll.</i>
LISETTE, Madame le B.'s maid			<i>Mother.</i>

Drawing-room of MADAME LE BRUN.

MADAME LE B. *nursing her baby and singing* "Ah! vous dirai-je Maman?" *A knock at the door. Enter LISETTE.*

LISETTE. Voici Madame Morin, Madame, qui vient vous visiter avec ses enfants.

Enter MADAME M. and CHILDREN.

MADAME LE B. Bonjour, Madame. Je suis charmée de vous voir, et vos enfants, qu'ils sont grands!

MADAME M. Bonjour, Madame. Comment vous portez vous?

MADAME LE B. Je me porte très bien, je vous remercie.

MADAME M. Nous voudrions bien voir votre cher petit bébé. Comment va-t-il?

MADAME LE B. Il va très bien, je vous remercie, Madame.

LISETTE. Est-ce-que je puis le prendre dans mes bras? *(Takes him, the others crowd round.)*

LISETTE. N'est-ce-pas qu'il a des yeux bleus?

MADAME M. Oh! oui, ils sont si grands et si bleus.

H. AND L. Oh! le joli petit bébé!

LISETTE. Et il a des cheveux blonds!

VISITORS. Oh! oui, il a des cheveux blonds et bouclés.

MADAME M. Je trouve que c'est un bien joli enfant, Madame.

LISETTE. C'est vrai, et il est aussi très sage; il dort tout le temps.

MADAME LE B. Il pleure très rarement.

H. AND L. Qu'il a une jolie robe blanche et des rubans roses!

LISETTE. Je vais le mettre dans son berceau; il vous dit "Bonjour Mesdames et Monsieur."

VISITORS (*kissing him*). Bonjour, cher petit.

MADAME M. Au revoir, chère Madame.

MADAME LE B. Au revoir, Madame. Faites mes compliments à Monsieur votre mari. Adieu, mes enfants.

Possibly at the next rehearsal some of the articles of dress might be changed and more talk added, and coffee might be offered. After two or three rehearsals, if all goes well enough, perhaps "Father" will be invited to make an audience, and his applause and interest will give much zest and point to the little ones' efforts.

Sometimes a passing event will furnish a motive for a little play, such as the arrival of a hamper of flowers. The children sitting round the table will unpack the flowers with their mother, and while making them up into little bunches will learn the names, "la violette," "la perce-neige" (they will be delighted with the prettiness of the snowdrop's name), "la primevère," "la mousse," "la fougère"; "elles sentent bon," "elles sont très fraîches," "combien coûtent-elles"? When the play has been discussed, the costumes arranged—old clothes for two flower-girls, walking-dress for Madame Morin and children, and cap and spectacles for grandmamma in the second scene, we are ready to begin

"LES FLEURS DU PRINTEMPS."

CHARACTERS.

AIMÉE	}	<i>Flower-girls</i>	...	...	}	<i>Mother.</i>
JEANNE						<i>Next to eldest.</i>
MADAME MORIN	...	...	...	...		<i>Eldest.</i>
HENRI AND LUCILLE	...	...	...	...		<i>The little ones.</i>

SCENE I.

The Street.

Enter Flower-girls wearily, with baskets of flowers.

AIMÉE. Il fait bien froid, aujourd'hui.

JEANNE. Oui, vraiment, il fait bien froid.

AIMÉE. Je suis si fatiguée.

JEANNE. Et moi, aussi, je suis très fatiguée.

AIMÉE. Voici une dame qui arrive.

Enter MADAME M. and CHILDREN.

Voulez vous des fleurs, Madame?

H. AND L. Oh, Maman, regardez les jolies fleurs.

AIMÉE. Des violettes? Madame; elles sentent bon.

MADAME M. Ce sont de très jolies fleurs; elles sentent très bon. Combien coûtent-elles?

AIMÉE. Elles coûtent six sous la douzaine.

MADAME M. Bien, j'en prendrai pour six sous.

JEANNE. Des primevères? Madame, elles sont très fraîches.

H. AND L. Papa aime tant les primevères, Maman.

MADAME M. C'est vrai, j'en prendrai pour un franc.

AIMÉE. Voulez vous des perce-neige? Madame.

H. AND L. Oh, Maman, les perce-neige sont si jolies.

MADAME M. Bien, donnez m'en pour six sous, avec un peu de mousse, et un peu de fougère.

AIMÉE. Voici un peu de mousse, Madame.

JEANNE. Voici un peu de fougère, Madame.

H. AND L. Nous aimons tant les fleurs. (*Carry off their basketful with delight.*)

FLOWER-GIRLS. Madame a acheté toutes nos fleurs, nous pouvons retourner chez nous

SCENE II.

Drawing-room at MADAME MORIN'S.

Family at work and play. Enter Grandmamma (mother).

G. M. Bonjour, mes chers petits. Comment va tout le monde? (*Kisses them all round. Children frisk about pleased to see her.*)

CHILDREN. Bonjour, bonne maman.

G. M. Quelles jolies fleurs!

CHILDREN. Oui, n'est-ce pas, nous les avons achetées dans la rue.

G. M. Elle me rappellent un nouveau jeu que je vais vous enseigner.

CHILDREN (*clapping hands*). Un nouveau jeu! quel bonheur!

G. M. (*to eldest girl*). Marie, ma petite, voulez vous sortir de la chambre pendant que j'arrange mon bouquet.

MARIE. Oui, bonne-maman. je sortirai de la chambre, pendant que vous arrangez votre bouquet.

G. M. Et quand vous reviendrez, vous me direz ce que vous ferez avec les fleurs que j'ai choisies.

MARIE. Quand je reviendrai, je vous dirai ce que je ferai avec les fleurs que vous avez choisies. [*She goes out.*]

G. M. (*to second girl*). Julie, quelle fleur serez vous?

JULIE. Je serai une perce-neige.

G. M. Et Lucille, quel fleur serez vous.

LUCILLE. Je serai une violette, bonne maman.

G. M. Et le petit Henri, quelle fleur sera-t-il ?

HENRI. Je serez la primevère, bonne maman.

G. M. Bien, et bébé sera le petit ruban bleu pour les lier.
Entrez donc, Marie (*she comes in*). J'ai un bouquet de violettes,
de primevères, de perce-neige, lié avec un petit ruban bleu.
Que ferez vous avec le ruban ?

MARIE. Je le mettrai dans mon livre.

G. M. Que ferez vous avec la perce-neige ?

MARIE. Je la mettrai dans un vase sur la table.

G. M. Que ferez vous avec la violette ?

MARIE. Je la donnerai à une petite fille malade.

G. M. Que ferez vous avec la primevère ?

MARIE. Je la donnerai à Papa pour sa boutonnière.

G. M. Eh, bien, vous mettez bébé dans votre livre.

CHILDREN. Oh ! le pauvre bébé dans un livre !

G. M. Vous mettez Julie dans un vase sur la table. Vous
donnerez Lucille à une petite fille malade. Et vous donnerez le
petit Henri à son Papa pour mettre dans sa boutonnière.

Enter PAPA.

PAPA. C'est bon cela. Encore, encore.

Many other subjects for little plays might be mentioned, such as "Shopping," "Presentation at Court," "Bathing in the Sea," "A Picnic," "A Visit to the Zoo." The chief consideration is that the children should be interested and happy, and that, while adding to their vocabulary, they should never be pressed nor bored. The crowning success will be when the little people know enough to arrange a play all by themselves, subject, characters, costumes, dialogue and all, all secret even from "mother," who, not needed as actor on this occasion, can go and double the "audience" !

BOOKS.

"En hoexkens ende boexkens."

Do all our readers know the invaluable series of little books issued the Religious Tract Society under the title of "By-paths of Bible Knowledge" ? (2s. 6d. and 3s. a volume). The *raison d'être* of the series is well shown in Professor Sayce's preface to one of the volumes, his "Fresh Light from the Ancient Monuments." "Discovery after discovery," he says, "has been pouring in upon us from Oriental lands, and accounts given only ten years ago of the results of Oriental research are already beginning to be antiquated. It is useful, therefore, to take stock of our present knowledge, and to see how far it bears on that 'Old Story' which has been familiar to us from our childhood. The same spirit of scepticism which had rejected the early legends of Greece and Rome had laid its hand also on the Old Testament, and had determined that the sacred histories themselves were but a collection of myths and fables. But, suddenly, as with the hand of a magician, the ancient eastern world has been reawakened to life by the spade of the explorer and the patient skill of the decipherer ; and we now find ourselves in the presence of monuments which bear the names and recount the deeds of the heroes of Scripture."

In the preface to a second volume which he has contributed to the series, "Assyria, its Princes and People," Professor Sayce goes on to say, "Before the cuneiform monuments were interpreted no one could have suspected that they would have poured such a flood of light upon Old Testament history. This light is manifold ; the very language of the inscriptions has helped to explain difficult passages in the Hebrew Bible. . . . No one can read the sketch of Assyrian history, as revealed by the monuments, which is given in the following pages, without perceiving how important it is for the understanding of the ancient Scriptures. . . . The chapter in which Isaiah describes the onward march of the Assyrian host against Jerusalem (chap. x.) is no 'ideal' description of an 'ideal campaign' ; the verses in which he tells of the sufferings endured by the beleaguered inhabitants of the Jewish capital (chap. xxii.) are no exaggerated accounts of a possible catastrophe ; the prophecies in which he declares that the devoted city was about to fall into the hands of its enemies (chap. x. 34, xxii. 14), were not unfulfilled threats." It is hardly too much to say that no one is justified, in these days, in teaching Bible history to children without pressing into service the strong confirmation, the marvellous elucidation, and the surpassing interest of the discoveries made during the last few years by Oriental archaeologists. Those of us whose childish thoughts were influenced by Layard's "Nineveh"—a large and costly volume, mostly borrowed for family reading—appreciate